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EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

CHICAGO SCHOOLS

A wise American of the last generation strongly insisted that we must not judge democracy by its failures. Certainly no one would be foolish enough to estimate the value of democratic government by the recent experiences of Cuba, of China, or of Russia. Even in America we are compelled to believe in democracy, not because of spoils politics and pork-barrel legislation, but in spite of such failures. In Illinois we still support popular rule, in spite of recent tragedies and bloodshed in East St. Louis; and in Chicago we still believe in public franchise, in spite of an incompetent city administration saddled upon us for two years more; we still believe in popular control of education, in spite of the fact that our schools are constantly the playthings of politics, of religious prejudices, of personal whims and ambitions.

In June the *School Review*, speaking of changes about to be made in Chicago school control, predicted that there was to be a new board made up of strong, independent citizens who would set aside old controversies and would organize a school system second to none in perfection of organization and in breadth and quality of instruction.

The *Review* added that this statement was merely a prophecy—it was the substance of things hoped for; we therefore at present have no more serious error to account for than a mistake in prophecy or of what might have been. In June the mayor of Chicago, or whoever makes up his slate, nominated a new school board. Very few, if any, of the appointees were ever heard of before; they may or may not be people of ability. Then followed a nauseating spectacle of criminations and recriminations, with two boards, a new and an old, trying to secure recognition. Charges and countercharges in the city council flew thick and fast, including threats of impeachment proceedings against Mayor Thompson. Finally, in July, the Thompson (or someone's) appointees won out. A court decided the new board was legally constituted. However, they are at present (July 31) being subject to a new attack. A master in chancery is hearing a case brought by a taxpayer to withhold from officials of the new board payment of city funds,

on the ground of the general incompetence of newly appointed members. Apparently his case is not hopeless.

If, then, it were not for the dictum not to judge by failures the outlook would be gloomy. The one ray of comfort is that the thousands of teachers and scores of thousands of children go on as best they can under fairly competent instructional conditions. The vast depths of the system are placid. The storms are all near the surface, blown up by great winds that start from nowhere and arrive nowhere.

COMPOSITION IN CORRELATION WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

It is the fashion today to urge that English composition as at present conducted is largely wasted time. Educational leaders affirm that pupils need to be transferred from the artificial situations prevalent in composition classes into what may be called "real writing and speaking situations." And they tell us that these real situations are to be found in courses of history, civics, geography, and the like, which furnish abundant opportunity for both oral and written communication. Upon these premises program-makers are advised to reduce formal composition to one or two fundamental courses and to make every oral and written communication in all classes a real composition exercise. This apparently sensible position may be accepted, if definite provisions are made for vigorous and positive instruction in language habits through the medium of topical recitations and written exercises in content subjects. No haphazard incidental instruction will suffice.

Primarily, there must be kept in mind the fact that interest in content and in form are entirely different types of interest. Any capable writer knows that his expressional powers reach a maximum of efficiency only when his attention is thoroughly centered upon the subject-matter of his discourse. True, he has more or less deliberately made a prevision of the various logical steps by which he proposes to proceed to his goal. But when once he is in the fervor of writing, he cares little for mechanics like spelling, punctuation, grammatical agreement, or even fine rhetorical distinctions. For these details he has no more thought than he has for the legibility of his handwriting. Indeed, if any detail obtrudes itself, he impatiently pushes it aside, satisfied for the time being with crosses for punctuation marks, with single letters for words, or with dots or dashes for the exact expression that does not spring readily to his pen. The result may be a queer page of scratches and even blotches decipherable only by the writer himself. For the time being his total message,

with a reasonable comprehension of its various sub-ideas, engages, and ought to engage, a writer's undivided attention.

But the practiced writer is content temporarily to ignore mere mechanics only because he has the comfortable feeling that his rough draft is to be subject to one or more thorough overhauls. He is willing to rely upon instinct and language habits to do their work in a fairly competent way, knowing that at the proper time and place he will have abundant opportunity to refine and polish. Before him in strict review will pass each successive sentence; dots, dashes, and abbreviations, a conglomerate individual shorthand, will be interpreted and completed. One sentence will be vigorously jerked from its context; another turned upside down; technical words looked up in the dictionary, often by a stenographer. In short, a writer pays to his composition an attention analogous to that he pays to his person before a dinner party or to his golf stroke when practicing with his caddy. He puts his thought, much as he does his person or his golf stroke, into form presentable for good society.

Content interest is primary, form interest is secondary. A worthy composition in poor form is no worse than a badly dressed man whose brain and heart are solid gold. A string of insipid ideas in good form is no better than a shallow-brained nincompoop dressed in the latest fashion.

Just in this distinction between content interest and form interest lies the great difficulty of teaching composition in connection with content subjects. Grant that teachers of content subjects themselves use good language habits (an assumption decidedly questionable), the doubt arises as to their willingness to insist upon, and their ability to give wise instruction in, the form aspects of composition. It is all very well for a principal to instruct all his teachers to guard against bad English in their classes. Much good may perhaps result. At the same time he must see to it that patient, timely, vigorous, and unremitting energy be spent by the teachers, quite apart from their attention to content questions, upon the grammatical and rhetorical principles of effective expression. Let a far-seeing principal decree that every bit of written work in his school shall be proofread by the writer, not once, but twice or more. This proofreading habit is about all that even a competent teacher of geography or history can find time to supervise. Instruction in language habits, in and of itself, must remain in the hands of the English department. By way of sensible co-operation, let English teachers use as laboratory material the proofread essays written by pupils in content courses.

EDUCATION AS USUAL

Dr. John H. Finley has just returned from Europe with the message that war-stricken France is doing everything in her power to keep her educational system running. Near the battle line she is even opening schools in caves and providing both teachers and children with gas masks. Dr. Finley uses the example of France to urge that America must not let the needs of the hour, however heavily they may fall upon the men and women of today, affect the defenses of tomorrow. Universities, colleges, and schools must continue as usual.

The colleges will be the hardest hit. One college president reports that 75 per cent of his students have entered some branch of the service. A high federal official calls the outlook ghastly. England's experience proves how futile it is to allow the preparation of well-trained men to languish. After the flower of her youth from college and university and engineering school had enlisted and most of them had been killed or disabled, England, with her educational institutions empty, learned that the war is one of factories, of machinery, of chemical problems, for which trained men are needed. Canada's colleges too were drained. Of course these men must go—brains, personal force, and leadership are needed in the trenches. But there ought to be spread abroad a most urgent call for youths not yet twenty-one to fill the vacant places in the higher institutions. Should the war drag on until millions of our troops are involved, the loss in our professional ranks of the next generation will be great. Thus, both as a patriotic duty and as an unrivaled personal opportunity, there rings out this year the call of the higher institutions for men. Commissioner Claxton has started the slogan, "No lowering of efficiency in our schools." This is good; but upon the 150,000 college men, future scientists, and trained experts the inroads of enlistment will be very heavy. Now, if ever, high-school influences ought to turn young men in the direction of higher education.

A LOOSE-LEAF RECORD BOOK

Superintendent R. E. Cavanaugh, of Salem, Indiana, reports the use of a loose-leaf record book which accomplishes several very desirable results. By its use the administrative officers are able to keep in close touch with the work of each teacher. The records are readily preserved in permanent files. Incidentally the records of each pupil in the various departments are collected and placed on file in the principal's office. The plan, moreover, provides opportunity for each teacher to supplement

his numerical estimate of a pupil's work with a brief statement of a pupil's effort, deportment, and achievement month by month.

IMPORTANT INNOVATION IN PART-TIME EDUCATION

A further step toward the practical correlation of education with industry is to be seen in the action just taken by a number of Akron rubber factories in establishing at the Municipal University of Akron thirty scholarships in the engineering college under the following unique conditions: The candidates will be chosen from high-school graduates ranking in the upper third of the class, preference being given to graduates of Akron high schools, although others will also be received. The scholarships will cover all tuition, incidental, and laboratory fees. Upon entrance the scholarship-holders will be assigned to a course upon the co-operative basis, working alternate two-week periods in factory and college. In the factory they will become a part of the regular factory training squadron, proceeding step by step through every department of the industrial organization. In the college they will receive training in basic engineering and business-training subjects, this work being related to their practical experience by a regular system of co-ordination. Each student will receive from the company employing him the sum of \$37.50 for each two-week period during which he is employed. At the end of the four-year course the graduate will have the opportunity of a permanent position in the organization in which he has been trained. Among the co-operating firms are the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company and the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, both of which have recently established industrial graduate fellowships in rubber chemistry at the Municipal University.

The plan just outlined is a decided innovation in the development of the part-time system, in that it offers the opportunity for a high-school graduate to procure an education practically without expense to himself—a condition now scarcely to be found outside such institutions as West Point and Annapolis. The co-operating firms are acting on the same sound economic basis on which the government itself proceeds, namely, that money spent in training men for its own service is well invested.

BIG THINGS IN THE SMALL HIGH SCHOOL

To many a teacher who has served her apprenticeship in the small high school or who is even now wrestling with its problems this ques-

tion presents itself, "To just what degree can the average high school in a small town copy the activities of its city model and still retain its own efficiency?" In the small school the faculty is usually composed of teachers of meager experience, if much enthusiasm. They carry many subjects and are sufficiently burdened with classroom problems. Before the work of the year is hardly well under way, however, a whole army of extra-curriculum claimants for time and strength lay siege to the school.

Mary Jones, perhaps, has visited her cousin in a larger town where there is a high-school bird club. Mary is a real science enthusiast. Her school must have a club too. She gains the principal's doubtful consent, enlists twenty members and secures Miss A's Saturday mornings for bird walks. Then Miss B is persuaded to organize a modern-language club, which meets Friday afternoon. A few faithful spirits attempt to attend both clubs, but the earlier organization suffers a distinct loss of prestige. By this combination of circumstances two teachers are burdened with an organization in addition to their six classes a day. The turn of the rest will come!

Meanwhile an interest in track work draws together another section of the school, only to give place to basket-ball enthusiasm. As the only man on the faculty, the principal himself has to put in his valuable time as athletic director, although his administrative work plus four classes a day is enough for one man.

Musical talent is not to be neglected; the school must have a glee club and give a cantata; the Senior play has become an institution, and the Sophomores want one too; what does a school amount to without a debating contest? Through all this turmoil the school paper travels along its beneficent but time-consuming way. Thus the little school is teeming with activities, all excellent in themselves. Its students enjoy the full benefits of a well-rounded education. But is there not another side to the question?

The same small group of growing young people is called upon to give attention and strength to manifold phases of extra-curriculum life until there seems to be little time left for their studies. Sarah Smith is a girl of great ability and much school spirit, one who feels it her duty to help in all things. Her mother begins to complain that Sarah has something to do at school every night and can never take care of the baby. Will James is an athlete and sings; naturally he is popular socially. His father says he is too busy to study, but he never forgives the principal when Will, because of low scholarship, loses his place on the baseball team. Mary Green carries five studies and won't neglect

her lessons; consequently, when debates and other activities fill her days, her late hours result in making Mary a "giggler" at school and a "crank" at home. Her doctor-sister has reason to be agitated over the state of the girl's nerves!

What must be said of the teachers? They have the interests of the school at heart, they believe in all these good things, but they watch with growing apprehension the lowering of vitality and application on the part of their pupils. As far as they themselves are concerned, they are doing their best, but with them, as well as with the children, too many extra-classroom responsibilities are undoubtedly drawing unduly on their reserves of strength and affecting the quality of their work.

To what extent, then, shall we have the big things in the small high school? Here is the problem. Who can offer the satisfactory solution? What is the "golden mean"?

B. E. H.

JUD, NORTH DAKOTA, COMMUNITY PICTURE SHOW

There are two fundamental principles underlying every successful community co-operative enterprise. First, there must be a definite end in view; secondly, there must be a mutual interest in the project. To say that Jud or any other community has a full possession of these principles would be but idle words, for all communities are somewhat alike. But be that as it may, the essential thing is that we have a community moving-picture show. It is strictly co-operative and all profits go back to the community as a whole in the shape of better films and slides. And, like most undertakings of this type, it has passed through every stage of success from little interest with empty seats to high interest and a full house.

Jud, however, is peculiarly fortunate in possessing a school board which feels, and declares, that the school buildings should be used by the adults of the district as well as the children. This enterprise is but one phase of their attempts to bring the school and the people together. Last fall they noticed that the assembly hall—ours is the country-theater type—was used but a few times during the year, mainly for political purposes. They then set about to find some means of bringing it into use more frequently and hit upon the happy expedient of a co-operative picture show that would bring the people together at least once a week.

Naturally there were a number of problems to be solved before their aims could be realized. Money had to be raised to buy the equip-

ment and films suitable to be shown in a school hall had to be found. Other problems, such as the organization, admission fee, and personnel of the management, had to be definitely settled.

Finally, the township—for ours is a township consolidated school—paid for the electrical plant; the patrons of the school held a box social to help pay for the motion-picture machine; the balance was made up by private subscription, to be later repaid from the profits of the show.

In the search for films it was found that there were several firms who were making a specialty of renting films and slides to schools and churches. The best dramas, clean comedies, and purely educational films were available. The state and federal governments, the Agricultural College, and a number of manufacturing firms had films that could be obtained by paying the transportation charges.

The "movies" are held every Saturday evening. The local band usually plays for the show. Thus there are two strong forces pulling the patrons toward the school buildings at least once a week, and they usually come—several times through blizzards, when the thermometer was far below zero. The program is sometimes varied by flag drills or other exercises by one of the grades.

The profits, however, have never been large—rarely over three dollars—for the surrounding territory is still thinly settled, but the interest taken has been encouraging and points toward a better and closer community spirit in the future.

The machine is also almost an essential in class work, and it is planned to use it more extensively in the future in illustrating various school topics. It may be, and has been, used for special programs, such as "Baby Week." Needed school equipment, paintings, and other improvements are easily obtained when a picture show or two may be given to raise the money, for, while the patrons are paying for the desired improvement, they are also being entertained and instructed.

L. C. C.